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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 007116

SIPDIS

BAGHDAD FOR MICHELLE COHEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: EMBASSY SUPPORT FOR AMBASSADOR SPECKHARD

REF: BAGHDAD 03608

1. Embassy Amman welcomes the visit of Ambassador Daniel V. Speckhard to Amman, Jordan from September 7-8, 2005, and will work with Embassy Baghdad to arrange meetings, as requested reftel.

2. Point of contact for this visit will be Greg Lawless, office 962-6-590-6557/6558; mobile 962-79-522-0909; fax 962-6-592-7653; email LawlessGF@state.gov or LawlessGMS@state.sgov.gov.

3. Valid visas are required for entry into Jordan. Visas may be obtained at the Queen Alia Airport. However, Embassy suggests visitors obtain their visas prior to arrival, as there can be long lines for visa issuance at the airport. Money can be exchanged at the Queen Alia Airport.

4. Post understands that reservations have already been made at the Le Royal Hotel in Amman. Due to security concerns in Jordan (para 6) visitors and TDY personnel are assigned hotels on a rotational basis. Therefore, Embassy Amman will make the final decision on hotel accommodations for all visitors.

5. Each visitor, regardless of length of stay, must have fiscal data to pay for direct costs of the visit. Each agency, organization, or visiting delegation will be charged for the actual costs attributed to the visit. Direct charge costs include, but are not limited to: American and LES overtime (for such services as airport expediting, cashier accommodation exchange, control room staffing, representational event support), travel and per diem costs incurred by post personnel in support of visitors' field travel, rental of vehicles and other equipment, long distance telephone calls, office supplies, gasoline and other vehicle maintenance costs, departure tax, and other airport fees.

6. Threat assessment:

Since late 1999, there has been a series of serious, confirmed terrorist threats and disrupted terrorist plots targeting U.S. interests in Jordan. Transnational terrorist groups, as well as less sophisticated local elements, have demonstrated the capability to pose threats here. Anti-western sentiment, though less pronounced since the end of Operation Iraqi Freedom, has been sparked on occasion by regional events, particularly those related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and, to a lesser extent, Iraq.

In May 2004, two men were arrested for plotting to assassinate diplomats in Amman, including an American Embassy employee. In April 2004, Jordanian authorities disrupted a plan to attack the American Embassy and Jordanian government buildings with explosive-laden vehicles.

In September 2003, 13 were arrested for plotting attacks against U.S. and Jordanian targets, including the American Embassy in Amman. In May 2003, three persons connected to the Zarqawi network were arrested for planning attacks against foreigners and tourist sites. The October 28, 2002 assassination of a U.S. diplomat in Amman outside his residence was ultimately linked to the Zarqawi network. Jordanian authorities arrested the assassins in December 2002. The most recently published U.S. government security alerts state that extremist groups continue to plan terrorist attacks against U.S. interests worldwide.

Crime is generally not a serious problem for travelers in Jordan, although petty theft is common in the downtown Amman Hashimiyah Square area and near the Roman amphitheater. In the narrow streets of the old city and at some of the more popular tourist sites, crowded conditions invite pickpockets and other petty criminals. We urge travelers to be more guarded in these areas so that they do not present easy opportunities to criminals. Purse snatchings in central and western Amman are reportedly on the increase. In several cases, thieves in moving vehicles snatched pedestrians, purses and drove off. In some instances, victims were injured when they were unable to free themselves from their purses. When carrying a purse, it would be wise to conceal it if possible, to avoid walking near the road within reach of passing vehicles, and to walk towards the flow of traffic.

17. Travel guidelines:

American citizens traveling in Jordan should exercise caution, be alert and stay informed of regional and local events that could quickly impact the security environment in the country. Travelers should avoid large crowds and demonstrations and take measures to avoid areas where they are most likely to occur (city centers, universities, refugee camps), particularly during periods of increased tension. It is also recommended to maintain a low profile and not establish predictable patterns of movement, even if only visiting for a short period. Recent worldwide USG security announcements continue to alert American travelers that terrorists do not distinguish between official and civilian targets. Therefore, facilities where Americans or foreigners are likely to congregate such as hotels, nightspots, restaurants, and places of worship should be considered as potential targets. Travelers should stay alert when attendance at such locations is necessary. Taxis are the only form of public transportation that is recommended. As Jordan is a predominantly Muslim country, cultural sensitivities should be observed. Female travelers should dress conservatively and not travel alone, particularly in areas where western visitors are uncommon. Western visitors and residents have reported incidents of sexual harassment, assault and unwelcome advances of a sexual nature. Such incidents, while troubling, are not common.

18. For further information, see the State Department's Consular Information Sheet for Jordan at <http://travel.state.gov/jordan.html> and link from that site to the most recent Public Announcement on Travel in the Middle East and South Asia and the most recent Worldwide Caution.
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